

The Weekly Shelby News.

BY HENRI F. MIDDLETON.

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The Weekly Shelby News.

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AMERICANS SHALL RULE AMERICA.

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Terms—\$1 in advance, \$2 50, payable within 60 days, and subject, at which time all subscriptions will be due and chargeable with interest.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1856.

WONDERFUL GROWTH OF IOWA.—Governor GRIMES, of Iowa, in his annual message, makes the State's indebtedness \$128,000; available revenue \$246,000; received during the year \$260,000; paid out \$249,000. The population of the State in 1846 amounted to only 10,534; up to June, 1854 it increased to 326,914, souls. At the present moment it probably reaches 600,000. The assembled property in the State in 1851 was valued at \$28,464,550; in 1855 at \$106,895,290, and in 1856 at \$164,194,412. This is truly a wonderful growth, and shows to what greatness and wealth this young State is rapidly attaining.

Important Case.—The case of DRED SCOTT, a negro, vs. JOHN F. A. SANDFORD, on appeal from the U. S. Circuit Court for Missouri, in the U. S. Supreme Court, and which was not fully argued at the last term, was taken up for further argument on the 18th instant. Last winter we published the leading facts of the case, and have not the space at this time to republish them. The negro brought the suit to try his right to freedom. He claims to have been emancipated by his master having taken him to reside in Illinois, which act, as is declared by the Constitution of that State, operated to emancipate. The Circuit Court decided against the plaintiff on the ground that by his return to Missouri his master's right, dormant whilst in Illinois, was revived—that the Constitution of Illinois was a penal law, which the Courts of other States were not bound to enforce. Among the Attorneys engaged in the case, we notice the names of MONTGOMERY BLAIR and GEO. T. CURTIS for the plaintiff, and REVERDY JOHNSON and HENRY S. GEYER for the defendant.

The case is particularly important, as involving the following points. 1st. Whether a free black man is a citizen of the United States, so as to be competent to sue in the Courts of the United States. 2d. Whether a slave carried voluntarily by his master into a free State, and returning voluntarily with his master to his home, is a free man by virtue of such temporary residence; and 3d. Whether the eighth section of the Missouri act of 1820, prohibiting slavery north of latitude 36 deg. 30 min., is constitutional or not.

The arguments in the case are reported by the telegraph; but they are necessarily brief and imperfect. If we can obtain a satisfactory synopsis of the arguments and the decision when made, we shall publish them.

BIGLER'S SPEECH.—We last week alluded to the speech of Senator BIGLER of Pennsylvania, in the United States Senate. It seems, by accounts from Washington, that the speech has caused the greatest excitement in the political circles of the national metropolis. His allusions to the "madcaps" of the South, and "the Barnwell Rhett school of politicians," was not at all fancied by the southern supporters of Mr. BUCHANAN; especially as it is generally presumed to be the foreshadowing of the policy of the President elect on the slavery question.

The speech is reported by the "Globe," and is essentially freesolish. The Senator declared that if he was himself a citizen of Kansas, he would vote against the introduction of slavery there, and gave the country to understand, that Mr. BUCHANAN would pursue the same course; and that, under the influences which will be paramount in the early future, Kansas is certain to become a Free State.

Letter writers from Washington say, Southern Senators looked aghast, when such expressions as these fell from the lips of the speaker; and the more they think of it, the more they don't like it, and the more they suspect that in electing Mr. BUCHANAN they have caught a Taras. So let it be. Mr. BIGLER was dumb last week when the present debate commenced; but the Electoral College have made up their record now, and the Senator's tongue can wag.

COL. MARSHALL'S SPEECH.—On the 11th instant, Col. HUMPHREY MARSHALL delivered a short speech in Congress, which has set the Democracy in a great flurry. From letters from Washington to exchanges, we make the following extracts:

"Mr. Marshall deservedly ranks among the foremost men of the House in point of ability, and his effort to-day was a convincing proof of his great power in debate, expertness, facility of resources and self-possession, amidst all manner of provoking interpellation. He stood his ground admirably, keeping hosts of assailants at bay, and commanding admiration on all sides, by the skill and energy with which he conducted the assault. The hall was thronged throughout, and though he labored under much disadvantage from impaired voice and physical oppression, he retired at the conclusion with conceded success."

The debate in the House on Thursday last between Col. Marshall and a strong detachment of Southern Democrats, has worried the outgoing administration more than I can describe. Col. Marshall is undoubtedly the ablest man and the best debater of his party in the House; and his irresistible charge upon the aggressive wing of the Democracy is felt to be the severest rebuke upon Gen. Pierce and his policy. What is quite noticeable is that the Buchanan Democrats seemed to enjoy the sport, and rendered not the slightest assistance in the defense of the party essayed by Col. Orr and two or three passionate but insignificant fire-eaters. In point of fact they seemed better pleased than anybody else in the abasement and humiliation of that troublesome division of their allies."

Mr. ORR, of South Carolina, undertook to reply; but he got decidedly the worst of it.

NOW IS THE TIME.—The next number of our paper is the first of the eighteenth volume; therefore, now is a suitable time for persons to commence taking The Shelby News. Send in your orders, friends; to commence with the first Wednesday in January; and get as many of your friends as possible to unite with you.

WILL YOU?—In order that the Editor of The Shelby News may have a good time, and be happy during the Christmas and New Year festivities, will all who owe him pay up arrears, and for 1857 in advance! And will each subscriber get another for us for next year? If these things are done, then we too shall have a merry Christmas and a happy New Year!

Sales of Real Estate.—It will always afford us pleasure to record the pleasure to record the sales of real estate in our county and the counties adjoining. But we cannot do so, unless the sellers will furnish a memorandum of their sales.

THE reported negro insurrection in Florida.—The papers of Tallahassee say, was all smoke—a hoax.

COUNTERFEIT NOTES.—It is stated that counterfeit \$20 notes on the Bank of the Valley, payable at Stanton, are in circulation. They may be distinguished by the imperfection of the likeness of FILLMORE, and the words "Bank of the Valley," which are shaded. In the genuine notes these words are plain. The names of the officers are well executed.

PROGRESS OF THE AMERICAN SENTIMENT.—GOV. GRIMES, of Iowa, in his message a few days since, recommends a Registry Law for that State. We quote the passage in his message which refers to that subject:

"Almost every person residing in any of the large towns in the State, acknowledges the imperative necessity of some law to protect the Ballot Box. That gross frauds are perpetrated at every exciting election, by the voting and double voting of unqualified persons is not to be denied. To remedy this great and constantly increasing evil, the passage of a Registry Law is respectfully recommended. Such laws have been in operation in several States for a period long anterior to the adoption of the Federal Constitution, and have fully answered their design."

This is but another evidence of the progress of the American sentiment.

ABOUT two weeks since the northern lakes and neighboring country were visited by a very severe gale, doing immense damage to the shipping on the lakes and the property on land. The Buffalo "Advertiser" publishes a detailed account of the effects of the gale, closing as follows:

We cannot close our chapter of accidents without a brief allusion to the utter failure of all whale-bone structures during this blow. Umbrellas went wrong side out in a most provoking manner, and so did crinolines. Some of the ladies on the street, so far as information extends, went up (like angels as they are) but some of them presented the appearance of an umbrella turned wrong side out, with two stout handles instead of the usual slender stick.

PROSPECT OF SUFFERING IN LIBERIA.—Rev. J. BURNS, the Superintendent of the Methodist mission in Western Africa, writes from Monrovia, under date of October 15, as follows:

"There is now a strong probability that the ensuing twelve months will be rather a serious time throughout Liberia for bread-stuffs. This has been a very hard year, and produce of all kinds has been high. The misfortune is, that in many places, and for some weeks together, it could not be had at any price, hundreds among the natives even having died of want. There is every reason to fear that the next year will be much worse than this one. Rev. Mr. Scyes was well when last we heard from him at Cape Mount. The Lark will be despatched to the point in a few days to bring him down, with a view to his inter- or trip."

BROOKOVER ESCAPED.—The case of the Commonwealth against William Brookover, for stealing \$600 in gold, about three years ago, occupied from six to nine days of the Mason Circuit Court, at three different trials—greatly to the cost, disappointment, and some suits, the positive injustice and serious pecuniary loss of some litigants. The extraordinary determined defense made by able lawyers for him, and the strenuous efforts of his family and a few friends, prevented the final issue of the matter until the recent October court. He was then committed and sentenced to the penitentiary for three years—but by similar extraordinary efforts, got a hearing before the Court of Appeals, where the case was heard by counsel last week, and on Wednesday last was affirmed. The news reached here on Friday morning. Between 10 and 2 o'clock on Friday (last) night, he effected his escape.—*Mayfield Eagle*.

THE PROJECTED INSURRECTION.—The contemplated negr-insurrection, which appears to have extended through a good many counties in southern Kentucky and contiguous counties in Tennessee, reaching as far as Gallatin, is pretty well quashed. The leaders, including some white men as well as negroes, have been arrested and severely punished, and several hung. One negro, at one of the iron works at Tennessee, said he knew all about the plot, but would die before he would reveal anything: and he did die under the lash, after having received 750 lashes well laid on.

The excitement is dying out at the Iron Works, where it was greatest, and the general opinion is that the danger of insurrection is past; especially if due caution is exercised by the patrols and the investigating committees.

In our own country, so far as we can learn, up to this time, no proof has been elicited to cause the arrest and confinement of any slave, for being a party to the plot, although some have been suspected to some extent. The necessary measures have been adopted by the citizens of our town to bring to punishment any who may be proven guilty. All suspicion and evidence will be thoroughly investigated. A large and efficient police has been appointed to protect the town from this time till after the holidays.

Since the above was in type, we learn that considerable excitement exists in this county in the neighborhood of Volney and Gordonsville. A number of negroes have been arrested on suspicion, and two were brought to town on Monday evening and lodged in jail.—*Russellville (Ky.) Herald*.

Congress.—On the 15th instant the Senate, had under consideration the subject of eligibility of Mr. HARLIN, Senator from Iowa. It was referred to the Judiciary Committee. The bill to settle revolutionary claims was then discussed until adjournment.

In the House, Mr. Etridge offered the following resolution:

Resolved. That this House regard all resolutions or propositions of every kind, by whomsoever made, for the revival of the African slave trade, as shocking to the moral sentiment of the enlightened portion of mankind, or any on the part of Congress legislating or conniving at or legalizing that horrid and inhuman traffic, would greatly subject the United States to the reproach of all civilized and christianized people throughout the world. Objection was made to the introduction of the resolution.

On motion of Mr. Orr, the resolution was amended, simply declaring it inexpedient, unwise and contrary to the policy of the United States to repeal the laws prohibiting the African slave trade was agreed to, only eight voting in the negative.

DECEMBER 16.—In the Senate, a call was made on the Secretary of War for copies of all letters addressed to that department or to Wilson Shannon, late Governor of Kansas, by Col. Sumner relative to Kansas affairs, which have not heretofore been communicated. A resolution granting further time to the Texas creditors to present their claims, was debated for some time.—Mr. Fessenden introduced a bill in addition to the act more effectually to provide for the punishment of certain crimes against the United States. Mr. Fessenden explained that it was intended to remedy certain defects in criminal law. It has been found that for the crime of manslaughter when committed on the high seas but the person not dying until he arrived on land there is no punishment. Instances have occurred where the individual committing such a crime has escaped on this ground. The bill proposed a remedy for that defect.

2d. Because I am clearly of the opinion that my act would be in violation of the law I have sworn to support and execute.

3d. In making such arrest, without a legal warrant or other circumstances as would otherwise justify it, it is most clear to my mind that I would lay myself liable to a suit of damages which might involve and ruin my securities.

The foregoing reasons and my own convictions of duty as a law officer have irresistibly impelled me to this decision.

The Marshal adds: "your determination, as expressed this evening (if I refuse to execute your order) to suspend me or procure my removal from my office by the President, induces me to say that I had, some days since, determined to discontinue my present official relation to the Territory, and I now desire the favor of you to assure the President of my gratitude for his confidence and kindness, and ask him to relieve me from my present position as soon as may be convenient."

The President forthwith removed the Marshal, and appointed Mr. Spencer, of Ohio, to succeed him.

Upon the Marshal declining to obey the mandate of the Governor, Col. Titus, was sent out with six men by the Governor to re-arrest Hayes, which they did, and he was taken again to Leecomptor for confinement. Upon his being replaced in prison, his counsel set about to procure his release and Judge Leecomptor, upon application, again issued a writ of *habeas corpus*, and again set him at liberty.

Arrangements have been completed with the postal authorities of Great Britain and Canada for a mutual registration of valuable letters.

Postal conventions are pending with Holland and Mexico, and an informal arrangement has been concluded with Hamburg for an exchange of mails by the Hamburg steamer, whereupon Gov. Geary fearlessly pronounced the 28th section of the tariff act of August, '42, so as to prohibit the importation of indecent and obscene prints, transparencies, statutes, &c., the parties offering to be proceeded against by due course of law and the articles destroyed. The bill passed.

The balance of the day was devoted to a discussion between the Black Republicans and Pierce men, about the President's Message.

DECEMBER 17.—In the Senate, the bill allowing further time to the Texas creditors to file their claims, passed. Mr. Setor introduced a resolution, which was adopted, requesting the Secretary of the Navy to report respecting his diplomatic relations with Nicaragua, and expressed an opinion that this Government had made a mistake from beginning to end concerning the Central American question. Wishing to refresh the recollections of the past, he spoke of the importance, as recited in the President's special message of May last, of having a peaceful passage between the two oceans, to be secured by his office, and violated his duty in ordering the arrest of the prisoner who had been discharged by due course of law, and by a legally constituted tribunal.

It seems to us that Gov. Geary pursued a high-handed and unauthorized course in relation to this whole affair. The prisoner was entitled, as a matter of right, to this writ of *habeas corpus*, and the Judge had no right to refuse it. Upon being brought before him, it was the duty of the Judge to hear the facts and determine the question of the legality of his imprisonment. If the Grand Jury, who make up their verdict with the ex parte testimony of the Commonwealth, agreed as to the degree of crime committed, the Judge upon a full hearing of all the facts had a right to say so, and admit the prisoner to bail. He did not therefore, in our judgment, go beyond the clear line of his duty in the course he pursued, and we again say that, notwithstanding of any power conferred upon the Executive to revise and annul the acts of the Judicial department of the Territory, we are clearly of opinion that Gov. Geary assumed powers not pertaining to his office, and violated his duty in ordering the arrest of the prisoner who had been discharged by due course of law, and by a legally constituted tribunal.

The aggregate postage, foreign and domestic, on mails transmitted by the United States steamship lines, was last year \$1,035,740, a falling off of some \$25,000, as compared with the previous year. Deducting the inland postage, the net revenue from ocean postage by the Collins line was \$339,749, by the Bremen line \$86,492, and by the Havre line \$71,882.

The total amount of letter postage on British mails was \$897,648, on Prussian

mails \$299,578, and on Havre mails \$16,915. The Postmaster claims that the system of optional prepayment works unfavorably to the United States, the option of not prepaying being disproportionately availed of abroad, which throws the trouble and expense of collecting almost the entire postage, and of accounting to the foreign countries for their share of it upon the United States post office department.

The abolition of the franking privilege is urged, that the department be allowed to charge the government the ordinary rates on franked matter; also the abolition of the fifty per cent. deduction on the postage of periodicals paid in advance. With these changes, and the relief of the department from the burden of the ocean mail service, the Postmaster General thinks that this department would support itself.

As to the ocean mail steamers, the Postmaster General does not understand why some of them should not start from other ports than New York, for more general convenience.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY.—The new steam frigate *Wabash*, Capt. Theodore Engle, the flag ship; the sloops-of-war *Saratoga*, Commander Titon, and *Cyane*, Commander R. G. Robb, form the Home Squadron, which is still under the command of Commodore Paulding.

The Brazil squadron, Commander French

Forrest, consists of the flag ship *St. Lawrence*, Capt. Hall, and sloop-of-war *Germain*, Commander Lynch, for whose return orders were issued on the 31st of October last. The *Falmouth* will join the squadron in a few weeks.

The Mediterranean Squadron, Commodore Breeze, consists of the flag ship, the frigate *Congress*, Capt. Craven; and the sloop-of-war *Constitution*, Capt. Bell; steam frigate *Susquehanna*, Capt. Sands. The store ship *Supply*, Lieut. Commanding Porter, is in the Mediterranean on special service under the War Department.

The African Squadron, Com. Crabbe, is composed of the flag ship, the sloop-of-war *Levant* and *Portsmouth*. The operations of this squadron are not interesting.

The Pacific Squadron, Commodore Merrine, consists of the flag ship *Independence*, Commander Hoff, and the sloop-of-war *John Adams*, St. Mary's, Decatur, and the steamer *Massachusetts*.

The Secretary regrets that Commodore Merrine failed to make a personal examination of the supposed *guano* island, and recommends that another small steamer be sent to visit the islands.

Reference is made to the protection of our citizens at Panama by vessels of this squadron. An additional Pacific squadron is recommended. Owing to the increasing importance of the Central American States, renders it politic to double our Pacific squadron as soon as possible.

The remainder he is sending to-day to Parkville, (thirty miles below here,) where the steamer *Australia* is now waiting for them. With them depart the last hopes of the pro-slavery men in Kansas.

Governor Geary, having become satisfied that he can make nothing by adhering to the pro-slavery party, has become a Free State man. He has taken steps to have all the officers in the Territory, except Cato, (who is so pliant that he can use him for his purpose) dismissed. Woodson will come next.

Reference is made to the protection of our citizens at Panama by vessels of this squadron. An additional Pacific squadron is recommended. Owing to the increasing importance of the Central American States, renders it politic to double our Pacific squadron as soon as possible.

The Behring's Strait Expedition having completed its work, has returned.

A large portion of the report is devoted to survey which has been made of the bot-

tom of the sea; and the scientific discoveries in this exploration of the great deep will be found deeply interesting. Specimens

have been produced from the bed of the ocean, and beautiful charts made mapping out its depths at distances of thirty, forty, sixty, and one hundred miles. The greatest depth obtained was two thousand and seventy fathoms—two and a half miles.

Under the head of ordnance gunnery, the Secretary recommends the establishment of a practive ship, in which gunnery alone shall be taught.

The great beauty and superiority of the new steam frigates are alluded to with much pride, and the Secretary says their introduction constitutes a new era in the history of the United States Navy. He repeats his recommendation of last year about the building of several additional sloops-of-war.

The subject of enlistment and the good faith of the government towards the sailors is elaborated at length, and the policy of the department defended and explained. This, however, is of no interest to the general reader.

There are three vacancies in the grade of captain and fourteen in that of lieutenant, some of which occurred several months since. Mr. Dobbins is not unmindful of the causes which prompted a suspension of executive action, but the interests of the service require that they should be filled either by promotions in the regular way or by nominating for restoration to the active list some of the reserved or dropped officers.

The Navy Academy continues to prosper,

Garland.

From the New York Journal of Commerce.
The Christmas Tree.
Of all the stores our German brothers brought us.
Long since across the sea.
Best do I love the simple faith they taught us.
Linked with the Christmas Tree.

The servant customs of an age departed,
Lingered on.

The German mother's faith, so earnest-hearted,
Her child will not forget.

In the dear Father land, ere earth rejoices,
To bid the Christmas morn.

Ere tuneful chimes and neighbor's loving voices
Say gladly, "Christ is born!"

When o'er the German hills, with fading glory,
The parting sunbeams shine,—

Gold the green valleys, linked with feudal story,
And linger on the Rhine—

When comes the night, and softly shines in heaven
A love star, pure and clear.

To Christmas eve all joyous hopes are given.
The brightest of the year.

Then light and joy seem hovering o'er each dwelling
From eot to castle hall.

And children's voices cheerily are telling
The faith that's shared by all.

From rooms fast closed, come sounds of preparation,
Light through each creveth glow.

While parents watch, with glad anticipation,
To see their sons enclose.

The glad hour comes last, to earnest glances
The full broad moon, the bright, the glowing.

Then comes the sequel to their childhood fancies,
To mingle hope and doubt.

Mid lighted papers all so brightly blazing.
The Christmas Tree is seen.

It stands aloft, its laden branches raining,
The glorious evergreen!

From every tiny twig and spray suspended,
Shine sparkling Christmas gifts.

And there the child, with smile and laughter
Blinked the allotted treasure gifts.

The demure Mrs. Cowslip, the cow, was
thinking about nothing; she was standing in her stall, chewing her cud, as the door opened, and a light flashed into her eyes. She turned towards that side, and made a low morsing, in token that she recognized those who had entered, and that they were welcome. But when the children in their zeal sprang forward, and gave her pieces of their bread, and screamed into both her ears, "it is now Christmas, Cowslip!" she stepped hastily backwards, shook her head violently, and stared, as if she would say, "Nay, but that is something out of the common way!" and looked quite confounded.

But as Cowslip was a very rational and intelligent cow, she collected her faculties, extended her nose, snuffed at her bread, took it into her mouth, and chewed it with an excellent relish, supped up a good draught of Christmas ale, and appeared quite satisfied with Christmas. When the mother had strown her a bed of fresh straw, and given her an armful of the very best, and finest hay from the rack, she said, "God keep thee now, my darling; thou now hast had Christmas eve!" At these words, Cowslip seemed rightly to comprehend the master, and with a great fragrant lock of hay in her mouth, she laid herself easily asleep, upon which she stared at the light, and had her own musings about the stars, which the children tried to make her observe of. But the only reply she made was by a gentle lowing. After that they carried a tassel of Christmas bread, and announced to him that it was now Christmas.

Polly pointed his ears, and lifted his head; expanded his nostrils, and neighed with animation, as if he wished to make it known that he expected this intelligence, and that it was welcome to him.

The sheep bleated, and licked the hands that gave them their Christmas entertainment. For it was Christmas porridge which now stood and boiled on the hearth; and this was no other than Christmas eve, and, at this very time, food was preparing for the whole of the holidays.

It was no food for the rich man's table, of

that you may be sure; it was only for a

peasant woman, and she a widow, who, with her children, lived here. Nevertheless, she was about to celebrate Christmas in the best way she could, and that was not to be despised, either. She had bought for herself three pounds of meat, and this was now boiling famously with parsley and celery, and promising to make the most savory soup, together with some delicious cabbage, for Christmas day. A piece of stock fish also was lying in its pan, and was all in an agitation, as if from delight of its own excellence.

On the table in the cottage there already stood the Christmas cake, and the Christmas goblin,—that wonderful beast which seems to say, "if you come here I will give you with my long, long horn!"

And thus would the Christmas goblin stand through the whole of the Christmas holidays, and make a great show among the Christmas meats, and then when this festival time was over, it would be laid, together with the Christmas cake, in a chest, where it would repose until spring came, and the ploughing began, and then they would take it and chop it to pieces, because the Christmas goblin is a hard piece of clay, and they give it to the beasts of burden, to the oxen and horses, which have to work in the fields, and, which, it was believed, would derive from the Christmas cake and goblin, such strength, and such an inclination for labor, as nobody can believe. Hence there would be abundant crops in the barns, a deal of grain for the mill, and plenty of bread in the cupboard; and all this would be caused by the Christmas goblin—that wonderful beast!

Two children, a girl and a boy, jumped about the room, and could hardly contain their joy on account of Christmas eve, and the Christmas goblin, and the Christmas meats which were cooking on the hearth, which filled the whole room with their delicious odor, and on account of the Christmas meats, at which they were to be present with their mother. Brother Peter was to drive them in the sledge with Polly; the children had never yet been out to Christmas matins, and could not imagine what they were like, but they had heard that they were something very grand and beautiful, and they were quite sure that they were so, and moreover, that they were prodigiously amusing.

Peter, however, stood cutting firewood for baking, and thought to himself that they were not at all amusing. The mother stood just by the hearth, and busy. Why did she stand so close to the hearth, and turn her face from the happy children?—The flames on the hearth saw why; they saw that her countenance was not happy, and that there were tears upon her cheeks. Why did she turn her face away from the children? Because she would not cast a shade on their happiness. She could not help it, however; she could not help thinking of her husband, who died two months before, and how happy she was last Christmas, when he was alive, and how kind he was, and how he comforted her in his last moments, and said, that if it were necessary that either husband or wife must be removed by death, how much better it was that it should be the husband, because the wife could look after the children so much better than he could.

The wife, however, now felt her lot to be a very heavy one, and had many an anxiety for the future, and most all on account of the eldest son, her step-son Peter.

The Christmas tree, which for lack of a better word, I translate goblin, does not represent an evil spirit, but is merely the rude figure of some domestic animal, covered with plaited or twisted straw.—M. H.

ter, who hitherto had been out at service, but who had now come home, since the father's death, to help the mother in performing the village service." And now, precisely this very evening, when the mother had resolved for the sacred time, and for the sake of the children, to put away all anxious thoughts, precisely now have they all come thick upon her, as thick and unceasing as the snow flakes, and when she shook them off, behold! there they were again the next moment, and made her heart so heavy—so very heavy! It was, as it were, an evil spell.

But the children, little Erik and Maja, they could think about nothing that was gloomy. "Nay, only look at the goblin, Maja!—See how he glares at you with his big eyes! Take care! he will gore you if you only touch him. He says, 'if you come here I will run you through with my long, long horn!'

"Nay, do you believe that he will gore me? do you really believe that he will gore? Ah, how good that meat smells! Will it soon be ready, mother? May we soon go to Cowslip, and tell her that it is Christmas eve, and look at the stars?"

Yes, the supper was now quite ready.—The mother lighted a candle in the lantern, and around the candle she put a grand paper star, which the candle lit up, and which, in its turn, lit up the candle.—The children then took each their bread-cake, and the mother filled a jug of new-brewed Christmas ale, and with the lantern in her hand, went out to the stable in colored wheat straw.

The little ones, also, soon lay side by side, on a large sheaf of golden straw, which they had brought in for Christmas, because, according to popular belief, people must both sleep and dance upon straw at Christmas, if they would do right.

The children did not undress themselves, that they might be ready all the sooner next morning, when they would be called for the Christmas matins. Each took a white handkerchief, which they laid under their heads, and thus fell asleep, side by side, while the fire-light flickered upon them, and kissed their very cheeks, which shone out quite beautifully upon the golden-colored wheat straw.

It was evident now, that the children were all dressed to bed, but not until she had seen to them, that she did not think about singeing. They could do nothing but stare about them and wonder. There was so much light! They could scarcely see for light. All the four grand chandeliers hung down from the roof blazing with lights. Upon the altar lights were burning in tall candlesticks. Upon the pulpit stood lights, and gilded branches extended from the walls, holding clusters of lights, and a light burned by every branch, so that the great aisle was like an alley of flame. Whichever way they looked, they saw light, light, light!

The benches were crammed full of people. Head was close to head. The children had never seen so many people together before, and they thought they should never find seats. At last, however, they did, on a bench where the people kindly made room for them. A respectable old woman took Maja on her knee, and the mother took Erik on hers. And thus were all seated.

The children looked about incessantly, and stared at all the grandeur and splendor around them. But the mother soon forgot every outward object, for just then she opened her hymn book, to join in singing the following verse of the hymn:

"His tears, like ours will fall as rain,
A mourner, he will us sustain
With strength from heaven impated
He will make known his Father's will,
And mercy's holy balm instill
To soothe the broken heart."

When she gain woke, it was pitch-dark in the room, and quite cold; and she felt a great weight on her heart, and in her head also. It was as if a large, heavy tear had collected, and could not find vent, but lay there as heavy as lead. She thought upon the death of her husband, upon the bitter temper of her son, and how solitary she herself was in the world; and then Peter's words occurred to her, "why should people live?" and she felt as if she would gladly not rise, but be quiet forever.

Spite of all this, however, she rose, and lit the fire as usual, and set on the coffee, for, although she was not one of those extravagance women who drink coffee every day, yet now at Christmas time, every body must have coffee; the whole household must drink coffee; that was a matter of course.

And when she looked at Peter, she saw that he also listened attentively, with his eyes riveted upon the preacher; and from this, she hoped for a good result; more especially, as with the new year Peter was to begin to read with this same clergyman, preparatory to his confirmation.

The little ones started up, quite bewil

dered; rubbed their eyes, opened them with an effort, saw the light burning in the pine tree, and then it came to their remembrance that it was Christmas, and that they were going to morning service. And with that they leapt up, and were quite wakeful.

They all drank their coffee, Peter as well as the rest, and then Peter, who, as usual, was silent, and out of humor, went to put Polly in the sledge.

When the mother came out of the cottage, dressed in her holiday attire, with her hymn book in her hand, and two little ones at her side, she saw the moon and the morning star, standing brightly above the pine wood, and shining beautifully in the frosty early morning, and upon the new-fallen snow. The sight did her heart good.

In the meantime, Peter had been getting ready the sledge ready. Thus they drove home, thinking by the way of the delicious warm cabbage which they should have for dinner, for they all felt hungry and cold.

And when they were all seated at the table, and the other had poured out the Christmas ale, the little ones glanced at each other, and then at their mother, with a roguish look that seemed to say, "now it is coming!"

And with that the mother lifted her glass, and the little ones, their wooden mugs, and all three at once exclaimed:

"Your health, Peter!"

Peter looked up, and seemed almost as much astonished as Cowslip herself, when they told her that it was Christmas.

"And all happiness to you on your birth day, for upon this evening you were born!" added the mother.

To which Peter replied with a look of displeasure, "That is nothing to drink liquor about, or to wish one drink about, either! It would have been better to have been unborn!"

"That is a sinful word, my son," replied the mother, severely. "When God gives health and strength to bear, to strive, and to work!"

"Nay, but why must one strive and work?" interrupted Peter.

"My dear lad, what questions you ask!" said the mother, "must not people live?"

"And why must they live?" asked Peter again.

The mother could not instantly find an answer to this question; it distressed her; but the lad often made use of such expressions as left a great weight upon her mind; and as she was now silent, Peter continued:

"When one has neither father nor mother, nor any in the world to live for, it would be just as well if one were dead; then one would be rid of one's trouble."

"Am I not your mother, Peter?" said the mother, and tears started to her eyes.

"You are only my step-mother!" said Peter, immovably, and rose up from the table.

This wounded the mother more than any thing else, because she knew in her own mind, that her heart had always been full of tenderness and maternal affection to

the children, or cottage of Sweden, is bound to do a certain quantity of work for his master, in return for the small portion of land which he receives.—M. H.

"These are Swedish peasant customs; they tell the simple animals, that Christians must be kind, and passing a light before their eyes, see, as they fancy, the star which indicated the house in which the Saviour lay.—M. H.

wards her step-son, and that she did not deserve this unkindness from him.

But she could not say anything now, nor look vexed, because it was Christmas eve. The little ones did not understand what was amiss with their brother. Their mouths were waiting for the good soup, and they could not imagine that any one could be better off than they were. When the mother saw that their appetites were somewhat appeased, she proposed that they should put aside a portion of their supper for old Alle, in the poor-house, which delighted them, and therefore the mother tied up a part of their meat and of their bread-cakes in a clean blue handkerchief, and set it on a shelf till the next morning, when they went out for Christmas matins.

Peter, however, contributed nothing; his countenance was sullen, and before long he rose from the table, and went to bed without saying "good night."

The widow and the children walked across the church-yard.

"Do you remember, children," said she to them, "what I told you about the Christmas matins, and what they mean?"

"They mean," stammered Erik, "they mean that—that God who—who?" "Who?" interrupted the mother, "since the beginning of the world sent teachers and wise men to mankind to—to,—now Erik!"

"To teach them his will," said Erik.

"Yes, right," continued the mother; "and last of all, he came himself down to them and condescended to be born on earth—"

"Yes, as a little child!" exclaimed Maja.

"Yes," answered the mother, "what he might pass through life with them as a brother, and might teach them rightly to understand his disposition, and how kind he means by us all. And that is he whom we call the Son of God, our Saviour, Jesus Christ."

"And it is his birth which we celebrate in the Christmas matins," exclaimed Erik, now very certain of his subject.

With these words they entered the church, and all condescended to be born on earth—"

"Hail to the glorious morning hour!"

The children did not undress themselves, that they might be ready all the sooner next morning, when they would be called for the Christmas matins.

The mother did not understand what was amiss with their brother. Their mouths were waiting for the good soup, and they could not imagine that any one could be better off than they were.

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